

# CCD BULLETIN

*Issues in Coastal Community Development*

## FROM THE FIELD: DETROIT WATERFRONT REVITALIZATION

For the past decade, Michigan Sea Grant has played a leading role in developing and coordinating waterfront revitalization projects along the Detroit River. By 2010, over eight miles of riverfront will have been transformed from largely abandoned commercial and industrial areas to mixed use development, including several open space and habitat restoration projects.

Sea Grant's work along the Detroit River has focused on a partnership with the Greater Detroit American Heritage River Initiative (GDAHRI), the major force behind the long-anticipated transformation of Detroit's waterfront. Michigan Sea Grant District Extension Agent Mark Breederland served for several years as chair of the initiative, and Extension Agent Barry Murray is currently continuing Sea Grant's efforts as part of the River Team. The GDAHRI spurred a collaboration of city and county government officials, private industry representatives and local community groups that has resulted in over \$1 billion in new investment, including the relocation of the General Motors Global Headquarters to a riverfront site. In addition, the Initiative has leveraged over \$43 million in public and private funding for river-related projects.

The centerpiece to the Detroit waterfront's ongoing rebirth is a linked riverfront greenway system – a regional network of parks and other amenities, including boardwalks, trails and marinas – that provides public access to the river while protecting and restoring wildlife habitat. Currently, more than 15 greenway projects along the Detroit River and key tributaries are complete or underway. Some of the links forming this ecological corridor are former industrial sites reclaimed via a state brownfields program that has expanded its scope to include redevelopment of blighted (but not necessarily contaminated) urban areas. As part of this effort, Michigan's first urban State Park has been established, and the USFWS has designated the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge.



[Renderings by Hines Development and Skidmore Owings & Merrill, LLP Master Architects]

Beyond environmental and quality of life improvements, the rediscovery of the Detroit River as a cultural landmark has benefited the local economy tremendously. In particular, the Detroit RiverWalk, a component of the greenway system that will be over three miles long when complete, has already re-opened the downtown waterfront to the local community, and several major businesses have redirected their entrances to open along this promenade, rather than backing up to the river as they have done historically. The new focus on the river has revived the downtown area as a recreational destination and a setting for community events, generating marked increases in revenues to local businesses.

(For more information, contact Barry Murray at [murrayba@msu.edu](mailto:murrayba@msu.edu) or Mark Breederland at [breederl@msu.edu](mailto:breederl@msu.edu).)



## RECOMMENDED READING

### ***Unlocking Brownfields: Keys to Community Revitalization***

The existence of brownfields can deter economic development, encourage sprawl and threaten public health. But brownfields can also be the key to reversing economic decline. This report (from the National Association of Local Government Environmental Professionals and the Northeast-Midwest Institute) documents the key components of successful brownfields projects from throughout the country. It can be downloaded at:

[www.nalgep.org/ewebeditpro/items/O93F4460.pdf](http://www.nalgep.org/ewebeditpro/items/O93F4460.pdf)

### ***Strategies for Successful Infill Development***

Also from the Northeast-Midwest Institute, this document addresses infill development beyond brownfields, including new development on vacant lots within urbanized areas, redevelopment of under-used buildings and sites, and the rehabilitation of historic buildings for new uses.

To download, go to [www.nemw.org/infillbook.htm](http://www.nemw.org/infillbook.htm).

## WHO'S WHO: BROWNFIELDS AND THE FEDS

**EPA's Brownfields Program** is designed to empower states, communities, and other stakeholders to work together in a timely manner to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfield sites. Go to

[www.epa.gov/swerosps/bf/index.html](http://www.epa.gov/swerosps/bf/index.html) for details on the program, including several grant opportunities.

The **Portfields** program is a NOAA-led federal interagency effort that focuses on the redevelopment of brownfields in port and harbor areas, with emphasis on development of environmentally sound port facilities. For more information on Portfields and other elements of NOAA's Coastal Brownfields Program, go to [www.brownfields.noaa.gov/welcome.html](http://www.brownfields.noaa.gov/welcome.html).



## COMMUNITY TOOL SHED

### ***Seizing City Assets: Ten Steps to Vacant Land Reform***

from the Urban Land Institute

[www.brookings.edu/es/urban/publications/brophyveyvacants\\_teps.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/es/urban/publications/brophyveyvacants_teps.pdf)

This pamphlet outlines ten recommended actions that state and local governments can implement to facilitate the development of urban land and buildings.

### ***ICMA Brownfields Web page***

<http://www.icma.org/main/topic.asp?tpid=19&hsid=1>

This International City/County Management Association site includes links to several state and local reports on Brownfields issues, and a lengthy inventory of other related reports and articles.

### ***National Vacant Properties Campaign***

<http://www.vacantproperties.org>

The goal of the National Vacant Properties Campaign is to make vacant properties a national priority by building a network of leaders and experts, providing tools to communities, raising awareness through communications, and providing technical assistance and training. The campaign's Web site includes basic statistics on the liabilities of vacant properties and links to information resources.

### ***Smart Codes in Your Community: A Guide to Building Rehabilitation Codes***

[www.huduser.org/Publications/pdf/smartcodes.pdf](http://www.huduser.org/Publications/pdf/smartcodes.pdf)

This report from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development provides a broad overview of the general regulatory environment governing the use and reuse of existing buildings, with examples of local efforts to reduce regulatory complexity and suggestions for encouraging the adoption of "smart codes".